

H.C.C. 14

T H E

HISTORY

And Advantages of divine Revelation, with the Honour,
that is due to the Word of GOD; especially in
regard to the most

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PERFECT MANNER¹⁴

Of delivering it, form'd on the antient Laws of

SPEAKING and ACTION:

Being an ESSAY to restore them. a

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S. E R M O N

PREACH'D in the CHURCH of

St. George the Martyr, LONDON,

On Sunday; Nov. the 15th. 1724.

Publiſh'd at the Request of many of the Audience.

By JOHN HENLEY, M. A.

Rector of Chelmondiston, in Suffolk.

T H E

HISTORY

W. Aug. 1848



PERFECT MANNER

TEACHING AND ACTION

BOOKS IN ESSAY TO THE

SAFER M O N

George the Martyr, London

On Sunday, Nov. the 1st

Published at the Request of many of the

JOHN HEWLETT



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TO THE
GLORY of GOD.

TO THE
Interest of all MANKIND,

THIS
E S S A Y

Is most humbly Dedicated.

BOOKS written, and publish'd, by the same AUTHOR.

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vindicated from the Objections of a late System.

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gence is desir'd to be sent in, from time to time, clearly circumstanc'd, duly attested, and
as well related, as possible.*



I S A M. iii. I.

*The word of the Lord was precious in those days,
there was no open vision.*



THE sacred historian points out a subject to us in this passage, very proper to dwell upon, before an assembly, call'd to attend the word of God, in the place of his peculiar presence ; that is, the real value of it, and the regard,

which is due to it.

FOR tho', we have often heard *our God*, in his own mansion, speaking to *us*, as a man speaketh to his friend : tho' we live in the open day of his truth ; and have, even now, a fresh occasion to rejoyce in the light of it, yet we are seldom so happy as to make a just advantage of it, because we are too insensible of the blessing.

IT does not leave a right impression on us, for want of thinking upon the privilege we enjoy in it. Had that reflection a prevailing force with us, it would

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rise by steps to a secret awe, a particular esteem, a growing love, a desire of it, a closer, a more devout attention to it, and a tender fear of departing from its rules.

BUT it commonly falls short of all these wholesome effects, in the present ebb of religion, because our sentiments of it are cold, low, degrading. We do not consider the height of the mercy we might partake of, in this gracious discovery of the divine will; and it is no surprize, while we do not entertain a fit opinion of it, if it has but a feeble power over us.

IT is a want of thought about it, that will create an indifference, a disregard to it: As this may spread to a larger compass, and become a reigning corruption, it must cause a decline of religion, and a growth of vice.

FOR since the ties of moral goodness are founded on the sense of a being, who has given us rules for the direction of life, and will bring us to a judgment upon them, in proportion as those rules are neglected, the spirit of goodness must languish, and the practice of religion must decay.

NOW, in order to revive a proper sense of it, and by that means, preserve and advance the credit and power of religion, shall take up my present design.

THE words before us are adapted to it in the most convenient manner; we are never so ready to con-

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ceive a true opinion of what is really good, as when we reflect on the want of it. When "there was no open vision among the *Jews*, the word of the Lord was precious."

THEY had been tempted to undervalue it, when it was more familiar; but when it was grown less common for God, to reveal himself to that people, with an unusual joy they receiv'd an opportunity. The rarity of the occasion instructed them to set a higher value upon it. They were convinc'd of its worth from the ill consequences of its absence, tho' before they had been less sensible of the advantage. As if the cheapness of the favour had pall'd the inclination; and nothing could reduce them to juster thoughts, but an experience of the effects arising from its loss, from the unhappy distance between them and their God.

To give the text all the light possible, and make it useful to the aim we should propose, allow me

I. To lay before you a short history of the word of God, at the several times of its revelation.

II. DESCRIBE the honour, the happiness, that accrue to us by it. And

III. THE respect which ought to be paid to it, by all in general: and particularly, in the dispensing of it; with its most natural application, for our present and eternal benefit.

I. SUF-

I. SUFFER me to represent the several methods, which God has been pleas'd to pursue, from the creation to the gospel, in revealing his will to mankind, with the reason of them.

WHEN God had form'd a creature, capable of acting freely by a certain rule, and of qualifying himself for his favour, by a compliance with his will, he at first, planted a clear knowledge of it in his nature, and gave him, at once, the strongest bent to practise it; but still left it in his power, by a freedom of choice, to adhere to it, or depart from it.

A DIFFERENT revelation of duty, in this state of rectitude, was unnecessary, because he had already the perfect light of it, in his mind, his reason; joyn'd with the most powerful byas to act accordingly. All the test of duty then thought proper, by infinite wisdom, was one positive law of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This was the state of innocence, or, what we stile, original righteousness.

BUT when the man, in this happy posture, as yet free from sin, tho' still liable to it, was betray'd to break the trying command of God, he lost that clear sense of duty to him, and that prevailing love of him, which govern'd him before.

THE powers of his soul were weaken'd, his understanding darken'd, his will became sensual: having departed

parted from the source of knowledge and goodness, he was given up to the sway of a deprav'd judgment, a corrupt will, unruly passions, and a wild imagination.

THESE defects in himself he must convey to his posterity; we now feel them; and the holy records inform us, they descended in this channel.

SO THAT since a certain knowledge of the divine will, and an over-ruling temper to perform it, were the methods of procuring the favour of God, and, with that, the true happiness of men, here, and hereafter: and both those advantages were lost by the fall, the help of God, and his express revelation, were needful, to put us again in possession of them, and recover our primitive title to his mercy.

TO relieve a lost being, and rescue him from the danger, attending his fallen condition, the divine wisdom and goodness contriv'd the wonderful plan of our redemption; which was fill'd at last, by surprising steps, in a tract of time, design'd to prepare for it.

IN this view, God began to open a communication with man, and reveal his will by degrees, in order to accomplish that great affair.

THE seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, was the first gospel, that was preach'd to mankind. After this, God was openly address'd, and known by particular marks of his presence; as we find in the different reception, given to the offering of *Cain* and *Abel*.

THEN *Enoch* is reported to walk with God; so also *Noah*, before the deluge. That phrase did not

only imply a religious life, which, undoubtedly, a number of men practis'd, besides *Enoch* and *Noah*, but a peculiar privilege also of reporting what God was pleas'd to reveal, for the instruction of others. Therefore *Noah* is call'd a preacher of righteousness by *St. Peter*; and *St. Jude* tells us, that *Enoch* was a prophet: tho' we are not assur'd, that his prophecies were penn'd, or handed down in writing to posterity. This was the state of a revelation before the flood: Some particular men were singled out by God to be managers of it.

AFTER the deluge, when God resolv'd upon a farther declaration, to prepare the world, by just degrees, for the Messiah, he had pitch'd upon the family of *Abraham*, of the line of *Shem*, the eldest son of *Noah*, for that purpose, in the secret counsels of eternity.

HIS design in blessing that family, was to pave the way for an open religion, among the *Jews*, the offspring of *Abraham*: a figure of the christian religion to come, and an introduction to it. This was carry'd on in the persons of *Isaac* and *Jacob*, but perfected by *Moses*, the servant of God.

JOSHUA and the judges, his successors, acted in his double capacity, of prophets, and governors, to the *Jewish* nation. After *Sampson*, the last of them, we meet with no immediate instance of a public revelation.

IT was, in this course of time, from his death, to the call of *Samuel*, that the word of the Lord was precious; *ῥῖ*, rare, unusual: there was no open vision. God did not reveal himself in a public manner;

not in the glory of the שכינה, which fill'd the sanctuary, in the tabernacle; not in the תמים & אורים appearances in the vesture of the high-priest; not by a prophet, openly empower'd to speak in the name of God; nor by the high-priest, who was sometimes authoriz'd to answer from him, in the tabernacle at *Shiloh*, and afterwards, in the temple, at *Jerusalem*.

THESE several ways of public revelation, were then discontinu'd, by providential aim; one private instance we read in the prophecy of *Eli's* fate, by the man of God; consult the chapter, preceding this of the text.

SOON after, *Samuel* was receiv'd into the sacred order; and besides the ministry of the high-priest, who was often employ'd in the prophetic office, the kings of *Israel* were openly directed by God; and a variety of prophets, seers, men of God, were appointed, in subsequent reigns, to act in the same character, between him and his people: 'till *Malachi*, the last of that class, who seal'd up the prophecy.

FOUR Hundred years after *Malachi*, *John the Baptist*, the second *Elisha*, was sent in his power and spirit, by a new, a particular order of prophecy, to introduce the Messiah.

THEN God was pleas'd, in the fulness of time, when all was mature for his appearance, to speak to us, by his son, the only-begotten of the father, full of grace and truth.

HE commission'd a holy train of apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to support the same work,
and

and raise the present and eternal happiness of men, on the basis of moral virtue, ascertain'd, completed by the scheme of reveal'd religion, to its last perfection : Whose records are preserv'd in the scriptures, for the endless benefit of mankind.

THIS is a general account of the measures, which God has been pleas'd to pursue, from time to time, in revealing his will to us ; in the state of innocence : in the patriarchal age, before, and after the deluge : under the Mosaic law, 'till the promulgation of the gospel.

II. REFLECT now on the honour, and happiness, accruing to us, by it.

THE privilege it confers upon us will appear in a short parallel, between God and man, and a view of our behaviour to him ; which has been often so unworthy, as to make the indulgence of a divine law, an act of the utmost condescension, on his part, and the highest honour an undeserving creature can possibly receive.

WE owe our first rise from nothing, our make, to his almighty power. He is the antient of days, without an author, without a cause, and has been from everlasting.

OUR being is frail, our talents are narrow, our nature tainted with voluntary sin, our reason feeble, glimmering, doubtful ; our desires ungovern'd, our
resolution

resolution wavering, our thoughts and actions liable to great imperfection.

HE is still the same, incapable of change, possess'd of all that is perfect; in wisdom unerring, in goodness never varying: in might, in dominion, boundless: unshaken in truth: of that dreadful majesty, that the pillars of heaven tremble at his rebuke; the whole creation attends his voice, and whatsoever he speaks, is done: Of that purity, that the heavens are not clean in his sight, he chargeth the angels with folly; and the seraphim cover their faces with their wings before him.

IT is he, who has stoop'd to confer with men, in the revelation of his will: with *us*, who are but of yesterday, and know nothing; who are to the last degree beneath him in all that is great, and grossly the reverse to him in all that is good: with *us*, who are no more than a drop in the bucket, or the dust in the balance: and are still approaching to that, from whence we drew our low original.

BEHOLD the honour of this conversation with God in his word, who stands at that immense distance from us in every perfection of nature, and has been justly provok'd to a different usage of us, by the number, the size of our offences.

ITS happiness to us may be inferr'd by the same clue of reasoning. God is a being of infinite knowledge, holiness, truth, and goodness. We are liable to the utmost ignorance, doubt, and frailty. So that, by a natural consequence, we enjoy all the advantage

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imaginable in the light of his merciful revelation to us.

THAT assurance of his favour, which is the ground of our present, our eternal felicity, laid in a just sense of our engagements to him, could not have been expressly attain'd, if the spirit of God, who only knows the things of God, had not display'd his will to mankind. The grateful performance of our duty depends upon that divine aid, which accompanies his word: and the most severe restraint upon sinful inclination had been absent, had we wanted the rules, the examples, the promises, the threatenings of God, in scripture.

I. WITH REGARD to each man, apart.

THIS body of sacred laws, publish'd by his command, has given a full light and determination to moral duty. It has explain'd the secret, what is the true happiness of mankind; and has let us into the cause, why we often enter into measures, disagreeable to it, tho' we approve the contrary in our better judgment; and that is, the corruption of mankind, deriv'd from the sin of our first parent.

ONLY a revelation could have assur'd us of this truth; in vain did the philosophers of the heathen world enquire about its original: for it depended not upon bare reason to clear its principle, but a matter of fact, an actual trespass of the founder of human

race

race, which no other history, no other records ever preserv'd, and could have reach'd the knowledge of posterity in no channel, but that of a divine Revelation.

IT has made those maxims of life, those rules of behaviour to God, and one another, which were proper to compleat our present and everlasting advantage, certain, and infallibly true to all; when before, they were only the dark Conclusions, and uncertain reasonings of the wiser, that is, the least part of mankind.

IT has told us, that the love of God and of our neighbour, takes in all the obligations we owe to either of them; that these two, join'd together in every action, make it entirely good, and that, whatever jars with either of these principles, is sinful; so that our duty, and acceptance with God must be no farther reckon'd upon, then we are acted in every step by a sincere affection to him, and our fellow-creatures.

IT has open'd the wonderful scene of our redemption; the mysterious atonement, contriv'd by God for his criminal, by the sacrifice of his son; who was sent to reinstate us in his favour, by the merit of his life and sufferings, and has left us the most perfect law and pattern for our direction, and encouragement.

THIS divine revelation has instructed us in what was never known with that certainty before, what
God

God is in himself; what has been his method of proceeding with men, in every age of the world, and how he has resolved to dispose of us in a future state.

HENCE we enjoy a clear, settled, full knowledge of our duty, our relation to God and one another, when the former views of it were conjectural, the dubious, imperfect conclusions of human reason, subject to endless mistake and perplexity.

UPON the practice of duty to God and man, the natural happiness of a thinking creature is built. Reveal'd religion has given us the highest satisfaction about it; therefore it has conduc'd in the utmost degree to establish our happiness, present and future, on the safest, that is, the truest bottom.

THIS is the benefit of it, with regard to each particular person, singly consider'd.

2. WITH respect to men, look'd upon in society, it is equally beneficial. It has given the greatest force to all those rules of action, that promote it's good and repose: universal justice and benevolence, the firmest security of a political body, are strongly bound upon us, in each part of it. So that men are now under a more powerful tie to be mutually good, than they would have been inclined, without the awe of God's word, and the terrors of what he has pronounc'd upon them here and for ever, to dispose them to it, by the most prevailing arguments that could be contriv'd.

IN short, our judgment is defective, our inclination irregular. In this revelation we are taught by the wisest

wisest master, instructed by our best friend, admonish'd by our creator, our lord, our judge; one who is still indulgent to his creatures, even when they are apt to be regardless of him their God, and destructive to themselves.

THIS is the honour, the happiness, that accrues to us by reveal'd religion.

III. LET us now weigh the respect which ought to be paid to it, by all in general; and particularly, in the dispensing of it, with its most natural application, for our present and eternal benefit.

THE steps we are oblig'd to take, on this foot, are to return him our due praises, and grateful acknowledgments for a favour so unmerited; to express a hearty zeal, and esteem for it; to be awfully attentive in the use and consideration of it, to make it the rule of our minds, our hearts, our conduct; from a profound sense of duty to him, who will suffer both heaven and earth to pass, rather than one circumstance of his law to fail.

THIS is an engagement upon all of us in general.

To enlarge on the particular duties, incumbent on the dispensers of the word of God, would, in this assembly be improper, and from one, whose part it is, rather to be instructed by them, than to instruct them, entirely vain and ill judg'd.

I WOULD only beg leave to submit a few remarks to the consideration of this audience, not in the least directed to persons, whom I have no right nor pretension to inform, but turning upon things only.

BEFORE I go into that detail, I would premise a short declaration, that the real motive of what I shall observe, is no aim of vanity, or affectation of being singular, but a conviction that it will the most highly tend to the interest of religion, the edification of souls, the good of mankind, the advancement of the christian faith, the glory of God, the credit and influence of his word, and the honour of this church and nation; and yet, tho' this is my persuasion, I have so great a diffidence in my private understanding, that I shall not only be ready to amend a fault, or an imperfection, but on a superior reason to sacrifice my opinion; my sole design being the discharge of my duty in the most perfect method, and the possession of a growing place in the hearts and esteem of my hearers.

THE topic proposed is that of sacred eloquence or the oratory of the pulpit; with regard to the publick exercise of it. The previous qualifications of nature, and acquirement, a well weigh'd composition, or, a discourse in the mind, and a ready mastery of it in speaking, are suppos'd.

THAT part of sacred eloquence I would now consider is this, a delivery of the truths of God, in the most just, forcible, and compleat manner. As they are subjects of the last consequence, they ought to be treated accordingly, with all the ardour and concern, that is possible, otherwise they will either lose, or fall short of their proper efficacy, and be rather injur'd and lessen'd, than equally recommended.

THAT manner of delivery, which is the most just, forcible, and compleat, on this important head, is
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that, which takes in all the powers of the whole man. Nothing less can be a compleat manner of delivery, to affirm, that if some of those powers, be properly employ'd, and not all, it may be as perfect a manner, as if all were properly employ'd, is to affirm, that a part may be equal to the whole, which is, in express terms, a contradiction.

SINCE then, the compleat, which must be the only just delivery, includes all the faculties together; it demands a right management of the utterance, and of the behaviour, as parts of those faculties, otherwise it must be imperfect and deficient, and therefore not just, or proper.

THIS right management of the utterance and behaviour implies a freedom from all the faults which may attend either of them; all levity, excess, affectation, indecency, and in general, any impropriety: it implies also a concurrence of those due qualities, that should adorn them; to be natural, easy, lively, graceful, harmonious, and solemn.

To launch out into particulars here, would be an endless task, and shall sometime, by the blessing of God, in another form, be offer'd to the publick; * some of them, it may be of use awhile to dwell upon.

IN proper speaking and gesture, the nature of the thing spoken, strongly imprinted on the mind, and present feeling of the orator, is the only guidance; and as things are, in their own nature, various, they necessarily

* In a regular system, deduc'd and prov'd demonstratively, with notes of all the proper sounds in speaking, and draughts of all the lines and movements in action.

necessarily require a variation of the voice, and of the deportment, that is conformable to each of them: * and the precise fitness of one certain sound and movement of the whole person, even to a line of the countenance, to one certain thing, most properly and perfectly express'd, and the consequent unfitness of any other, to it, are as demonstrable, as any proposition in the Mathematicks.

In particular, the close of a just discourse ought to be spoken with the greatest force, not, as the method is, by lowering the voice, to the end of it, which indeed makes a conclusion, strongly utter'd, seem to break off abruptly before the usual doxology. But as a true discourse must be suppos'd to grow it self stronger, towards the conclusion of it, and to end with a kind of triumph; and as the last impression ought to be very forcible, therefore that fall in a true discourse is absurd, and the contrary, the just way of speaking it.

THE passions require a language and address, different among themselves, as well as from other things; according to their several kinds, degrees, mixtures, and circumstances: all objects vary in proportion, the good or bad qualities of Men, the prosperous or unhappy events of life; the several ways of addressing God, in confession, petition, thanksgiving and the like. These, and all other subjects, claim a diversity of

* The masters of musick and painting, are the true masters of speaking and action: the principles of both are to be taken from philosophy, that is, a just, clear, distinct sense of the nature of things, in general; and in particular, from the mathematicks

of pronounciation, and of the conduct, agreeable to the distinct and true nature and merits of them. And this should be carefully study'd, in the reading of the offices of our church, as well as in our discourses.

No man speaks, looks, and behaves himself in the same manner when he is angry, as when he is pleas'd ; when he loves, as when he detests ; and it would be very absurd, to mention the pains of hell with a gay aspect ; to press the fear of God with an air of negligence ; or to exhort and persuade in the posture of forbidding, and of rebuke.

As this infers a necessary variety in proper speaking and gesture, so the advantages of it are great and manifold. It awakens, draws, and fastens the attention ; it works most sensibly on the understanding, the memory, the imagination, and the affections : it conveys instruction with more force and delight ; it renders the utmost honour to God, and service to mankind, and attains all the ends of public speaking, in the most entire and effectual manner.

THE contrary is loaded with equal disadvantages ; it does an injustice to the sublime word of God, the eternal gospel, and by consequence, to religion, to virtue, to good sense, and the benefit of mankind. It flattens, palls, and fatigues the hearer, and is apt to make the truths of religion appear less considerable, than matters of a far inferior concern.

OF this consequence, on either hand, the wisest nations and men, in the most enlighten'd ages, have been duly sensible. The antient greeks and romans,

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who have furnish'd the most conspicuous lights, the most lasting names of distinction, in the letter'd world, study'd the art of publick speaking and gesture, as it really is, as a distinct science: they labour'd night and day, they travell'd far and near for the best teachers, practice, and Information. Demosthenes has made the manner of delivery only to be the very essence of a public speaker. Quintilian has left us the most minute directions imaginable for each note and motion; and Tully was remarkable for his unweary'd application to the skill of it. The most venerable characters of the good old days of christianity, the Basils, the Chrysostomes, the Augustines, and a train of others, excell'd in it. To see St. Paul preaching with a vehemence, an energy like the blaze from heaven at his conversion, was a famous wish of one of the first doctors of the faith; and sure it is, when he open'd himself to the court of the Arcopagus, ye men of Athens; his gesture, as well as his voice, was the most forcible that can be conceived.

THERE is not a foreign nation in the world, that does not proceed on the same principle. Some among us, have appeared with lustre in the practice. Tho' it has not among the moderns seem'd to have been *regularly study'd, according to the principles of art, that is, of nature ascertain'd and methodiz'd.

THE principal causes of our defect in this noble talent, are the disadvantages of our public education, which

* Even the speaking and action of the theatre, is more commonly a mechanical road, than a just speaking and action. Those of the dissenting teachers, of the religious orders abroad, &c. are seldom proper.

which is so calculated, as not to train us up to it : the inconvenience of the rostrum, to which we are confin'd ; the method of entire reading what we speak, which is commonly injurious to the graces of eloquence ; joyn'd with some ill grounded prejudices. The countenance of the knowing, the polite part of the world might conduce to remedy this failure ; all good men should think it a duty : all judicious men should account it a delight to encourage the contrary.

It must naturally be imagin'd, without the least reasonable shock or surprize, that the usual freedom will be taken on this head, to censure, to detract, perhaps to asperse. According to the variety of tempers, and views, prevailing in the world, and which will prevail, as long as the world endures, men will always be liberal of their arrows on marks of this nature.

BUT since the thing is in it self just, laudable, and glorious ; the dictates of spleen, of envy, of prepossession, of design, ought to be contemned by a brave and a good mind. Truth will shine forth, and exert its power.

WHATEVER my Imperfections are, it may be hoped, that as a degree of fortitude is required to open the way, as well as of conduct and labour to pursue it, so the very undertaking is not wholly destitute of a claim to some indulgence.

THIS may suffice, with regard to the nature of sacred eloquence, the rules, the advantages, and history of it, the causes of our defects in it, the proper remedies, and the right treatment of objections to it.

AND

AND thus we have dispatch'd the Third head, relating to the respect which ought to be paid to the word of God, by all in general, and particularly in the dispensing of it.

ON THE whole,

Let us be induc'd to set a proper value upon that divine word, which is so nobly calculated for our present and eternal welfare ; that we may prevent the removal of this lamp from us, that we may escape the curses, that we may inherit all the blessings which are display'd to our view, in the book of God.

So shall we rise from the lower privilege of this distant converse with him, like that of Israel with Moses, behind a veil, to the joy of seeing him, as he is, face to face, in the happy regions of eternity face to face.

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